



Election Modernization Committee

Date: **December 17, 2019**

Time: **8:00-9:00pm**

Location: **Lyons Meeting Room, Town Hall 2nd Floor**

Minutes

Attendance: Greg Dennis, Walter Horn, William Logan, James O'Connor, Juhan Sonin, Jennifer Susse, Lesley Waxman

1. New member welcome, Paul Raia (designee: Arlington Disabilities Commission)

The new designee of the Disabilities Commission was chosen very recently, and as such didn't have much advance notice of the meeting and was not able to attend.

2. Review and Vote on Acceptance of Minutes for November 19, 2019

We read through the draft minutes to identify any necessary edits or corrections. We made one correction: we moved a comment from Walter about Town Meeting Member email addresses under the "New Business" agenda item.

Walter made a motion to accept the amended minutes, and Lesley seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Review of Correspondence received since last meeting

No correspondence received.

4. Subcommittee Report of Envision Arlington Survey Questions

Jennifer gave us an update on the status of our survey questions and the response from Juli Brazile of Envision Arlington to our latest draft.

Juli suggested removing item 1 ("Problems with the location of my polling place") from question 2, because it was redundant with the other more specific problems listed. She also suggested "Issues with voting machines or problems filling out the ballot" into separate "issues with voting machines" and "problems filling out the ballot" items. Jennifer said that the subcommittee gave Juli the go-ahead on those changes and that the survey would be published soon.

5. Warrant Article - Extend life of committee and expand voting to all members

Jim advocated for a warrant article that would extend the life of the committee and expanding voting privileges to all members. Given the ambitiousness of our agenda, given that the committee wasn't formed until the very end of the summer, and given that we want to wait until the survey results are available to better understand what changes we want to make, we could use another year to complete our work.

Greg suggested using language in the warrant article that allows the makeup of the committee to be changed, as well. If we extend voting privileges to every member, he said we could consider tightening up the membership to avoid any difficulties reaching quorum.

6. Warrant Article - Early Voting Resolution for submission to the Annual Meeting

Jim opened discussion on the idea of a warrant article pertaining to early voting.

Lesley talked about the complexities and difficulties of early voting in Massachusetts — how it has to follow an independent set of procedures from absentee voting. Early voting would be simpler logistically, she said, if it were implemented as no-excuse absentee voting, but that would require a constitutional amendment. The City of Cambridge considered a home rule petition to establish early voting for municipal elections but opted for a resolution to support state legislation to create no-excuse absentee voting instead.

Jim noted that we won't have the results from the Envision Arlington survey, including the responses to the early voting question, back in time to determine what actions related to it we may want to take at Town Meeting.

Greg outlined three options for an early voting warrant article. One would be a home rule petition to enable early voting for town elections, but given the logistical complexities of early voting and lack of Envision Arlington survey responses, it may be better to hold off on that for now. Another possibility is a resolution calling on the Clerk to schedule at least one early voting day on a weekend, which we lacked in the 2018 midterms. A third option would be a resolution in favor of no-excuse absentee voting. He said the resolutions didn't seem to be a worthwhile use of Town Meeting's time, especially since, again, the survey data is not in.

Jim made a motion to table the discussion of a warrant article for early voting. Greg seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

7. Ranked Choice Voting

Greg gave a presentation on ranked-choice voting and how it could improve town elections in Arlington. He disclosed that he is on the board and volunteers with the organization promoting the reform in Massachusetts. Committee members expressed interest in continuing the discussion at the next meeting. The presentation is available at <https://tinyurl.com/sc5toeu>.

8. New Business and/or Public Comment

We scheduled the next meeting of the committee for January 14th, 2020.

9. Adjourn

Jennifer moved to adjourn. Walter seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.